

VZCZCXRO1449
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHYN #2084/01 3221321
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 181321Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANAA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3230
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0267
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002084

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USAID FOR CHRIS KISCO
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TAGS: [TSPL](#) [SENV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: ROYG EFFORTS TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT HAMPERED BY
LACK OF RESOURCES AND ENFORCEMENT

¶1. (U) Summary. Responsibility for environmental preservation and protection in Yemen is divided between the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). Due to budget shortages across the ROYG, environmentally affiliated agencies are suffering from a lack of resources. Yemen's environmental issues are slowly but surely being recognized by the international donor community. Due to the enormity of environmental challenges facing Yemen, international donor community interest, including USG support, in assisting Yemen face climate change and promote clean fuel is crucial. End Summary.

ROYG INSTITUTIONS STRIVE TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

¶2. (U) Responsibility for environmental preservation and protection in Yemen is divided between the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (formerly Council). While the Ministry focuses on policy and regulations, the EPA primarily works on implementing activities. According to Dr. Hussein al-Gunied, Deputy Minister for Environmental Issues, topics that have appeared prominently on the Ministry's agenda in the recent past include climate change, the 2008 floods in Hadramout, drought, and air pollution. Although the ROYG has a 1995 Environmental Law, it has not been updated to include pressing environmental issues, and Gunied admitted that "enforcement is an issue." A country still run on leaded gas, Yemen also does not have a national policy for clean fuel, but, according to Gunied, is interested in introducing new legislation. Due to a general lack of awareness, it is challenging to introduce, implement, or enforce any legislation.

¶3. (U) Established in 2005, the ROYG's EPA works with line ministries in implementation of environmental policy, including both green issues (biodiversity) and brown issues (climate change and environmental preservation). The EPA has a mandate to undertake environmental impact analysis for industrial plants and to serve as the focal point for international conventions. (Note: EPA's predecessor, the Environmental Protection Council, was more of a coordination body. End Note.) The EPA has established six environmentally protected areas throughout Yemen, including Socotra, where it protects the ecosystem and unique species. Chairman Mahmoud Shidiwah told EconOff on October 20 about a showcase program in which animal waste from two cows generates enough biogas for five households to be sufficient in terms of electricity and cooking. The EPA is interested in attracting investment from companies that employ clean energy practices and have activities that reduce emissions.

LACK OF RESOURCES, CAPACITY PLAGUE ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES

¶4. (U) Due to budget shortages across the ROYG, environmentally affiliated agencies are suffering from a lack of resources. Gunied said that the Ministry has suffered a 60 percent cut in its budget in 2009. The Ministry relies heavily on cooperation with donors in order to fund and implement many of its projects. Even with continued involvement from the Water Sector Support Program (WSSP), which includes the World Bank, Germans, and Dutch, the donor community has the impression that the Ministry of Water lacks the capacity to implement most programs. Ali Kassim Manshalin, Senior Program Officer at KfW (German development bank), told EconOff on October 21 that "political will is a must now," in order to revive the water sector. Dr. Riyal Mohammed of the Yemen Association for Environmental Protection (YAEP), lamented the low priority of environmental issues within the ROYG, saying on October 20 that the "Ministry of Water and Environment does not do much besides attend seminars." (Note: The Ministry's Gunied asked for assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, particularly from the EPA-supported United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles. He also requested assistance from the USG in drafting new bylaws for clean fuel, air pollution, and emissions control. End Note.)

¶5. (U) Yemen's environmental issues outside of the water sector are slowly but surely being recognized by the international donor community. The World Bank is inviting Yemen to participate in the Pilot Program for Climate Change (PPCR) as one of the nine pilot countries globally. The program will help the ROYG integrate climate risk and

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resilience into core development planning. On November 15 to 16, the Ministry of Water and Environment held a workshop on climate change and adaptation in conjunction with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank to discuss Yemen's issues and future cooperation. The ROYG's EPA will act as the lead agency in implementing the World Bank's adaptation to climate change projects.

COMMENT

¶6. (U) Due to the enormity of environmental challenges facing Yemen, particularly in the water sector, international donor community interest in assisting Yemen face climate change is crucial. Because of resource and capacity issues in the environmental agencies, the ROYG could use additional assistance, specifically in regulating clean fuel. The ROYG has requested USG assistance in participation in the EPA's UNEP Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles and in drafting new bylaws for clean fuel, air pollutants, and emissions; the requests appear serious and assistance would be welcome. End Comment.
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